



Lake County Sheriff 's Office

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From the desk of Marine Patrol Deputy Sheriff Dale Pohto...

6 Tips to Get Kids Involved

Here are some ideas to help get your children, grandkids, nieces and nephews involved in your boating lifestyle. Obviously the responsibilities will need to be age-appropriate. And be prepared to add new tasks when they've honed their skills at the first assignments. You don't have to tell them that they're learning responsibility and teamwork, but rest assured they will be getting some great "teachable moments."

Get their help in creating a pre-launch check list If they had a hand in putting it together, they will be especially vigilant about checking for the appropriate number of life jackets, test the battery charge, and always verify a properly secured drain plug.

Teach them to tend the fenders, dock lines and how to stow them the proper way. Let them see you communicating with dock hands at a marina or gas pump station so they understand how the system works. Once they master the hand signals and nuanced gestures, they will get in the proper position before you have to say a word.

Make sure they are familiar with the basic boating terminology. You wouldn't take them to a foreign country without coaching them on basic communication skills, would you? Take the time to clarify fore and aft, port and starboard, lee and windward, etc. It will help them feel like they're one of the "insiders."

Always look for an opportunity to reinforce the "why." Children are learners. You may have noticed they don't respond well to "because I said so." Why not explain how the safety equipment works. Or show them how the trim affects the ride of the boat. They thrive on "behind the scenes" knowledge.

Show them how to operate the VHF radio to communicate with other vessels, the dock master or the local boating law enforcement. It's important they know the proper etiquette, plus they will love the chance to communicate with others via an "official" microphone.

Give them their own "log book," an unofficial record of your travels, complete with destinations, time of departure, passenger manifest, and illustrations they create to remind them of their trip. Later, they can add photos from the day to remind them of the highlights.

As long as you clearly explain what needs to happen, and resist the urge to constantly “advise” your crew, you can help make boating a family-friendly activity and keep your crew fired up about the next trip.